



Durham Region Health Department FAX about...

For Health Care Professionals



Botulism – Updated Guidance

As of April 1, 2022, Health Canada's Botulism Reference Service (BRS) will no longer be available in the evening. The BRS will be available during regular business hours and any questions or concerns after regular business hours will be addressed the next business day. Botulism antitoxin (BAT) ordering and administration does not require laboratory confirmation and will not be affected by this change. The Botulism Guide for Health Care Professionals has been updated to remove reference to the Health Canada after-hours process. <https://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/publications/disease/botulism.aspx>

Botulism Diagnosis

The initial diagnosis of botulism should be based on history of recent exposure, consistent clinical symptoms, and elimination of other illnesses in the differential. All treatment and management decisions should be made based on clinical diagnosis.

There are three forms of botulism depending on the mode of transmission: foodborne, wound and intestinal (infant and adult) botulism. All forms cause flaccid paralysis as a result of the botulinum toxin.

- **Foodborne** – severe intoxication; nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, constipation, fatigue, weakness, dizziness, blurred or double vision, dysphasia, dry mouth; acute bilateral cranial nerve impairment and descending weakness or paralysis
- **Wound** – spore penetration into open wound and toxin-production in an anaerobic environment; symptoms similar to foodborne but may take up to two weeks to appear
- **Intestinal** (infant and adult colonization) – spore ingestion, subsequent outgrowth and in-vivo production in intestine
- Other forms include **iatrogenic** (accidental overdose of toxin injected for cosmetic or other indications, and inhalation)

For the collection and transportation of suspect food and clinical specimens, call the BRS at 613-957-0902 Monday to Friday 8:30 am – 4:30 pm.

Laboratory testing to confirm the initial diagnosis can take at least 72 hours to complete and involves demonstrating the presence of botulinum toxin in serum, feces, gastric contents, vomitus or the implicated food; demonstrating toxicity to mice; or isolating *C. botulinum* from fecal specimens. In wound botulism, *C. botulinum* may be isolated from a wound specimen.

over...

905-668-2020 or 1-800-841-2729 | durham.ca/health

If you require this information in an accessible format, contact 1-800-841-2729.



Ordering Botulism Antitoxin

Botulism antitoxin ordering and administration does not require laboratory confirmation. **To request botulism antitoxin for your affected patients, please contact the Infectious Diseases Policy and Program Unit of the Chief Medical Officer of Health, Public Health at 416-327-7392 and request to speak with a staff member. After hours, weekends and holidays, call 1-866-212-2272 to retrieve contact information for the on-call person.**

Botulism is a reportable disease and must be reported to DRHD immediately at 905-668-2020 or fax at 905-666-1887.

April 14, 2022

905-668-2020 or 1-800-841-2729 | durham.ca/health

If you require this information in an accessible format, contact 1-800-841-2729.

